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MEDIEVAL TARTAR MILITARY ACCESSORIES FINDS FROM THE TERRITORY OF POLAND

Since antiquity the territories of Modern Poland, though situated outside the region of Euro-Asian steppes, had remained within the reach of indirect cultural influences or even direct penetration of the successive Nomadic groups which gained domination over the Great Steppe.

In the hitherto existing Polish archaeological literature the discussion about the possible ethnic interpretation of the archaeological finds, according to some researchers, connected with the material culture of the steppe nations, mainly the Scythians, the Sarmatians, the Huns and the Avars, has been given much consideration. However, there have always been extreme discrepancies in the conclusions, which results from the fact that in the case of these nations, both in the antiquity and at the beginning of the Middle Ages, pieces of information about their possible relations to Polish territories found in the written sources are scarce or do not exist at all.

The old medieval source basis is quite different in this respect. Some written accounts of the presence of nomadic groups in particular places which allow for the reconstruction of their routes have been preserved. Thus, an opportunity to compare information obtained from both kinds of sources, namely the archaeological and the written ones, appears. Moreover, it may be possible to verify the interpretation of archaeological finds.

The existence of formal analogies on the Great Steppe territories and a possible connection of a given find with the material culture of the nomads have been assumed to be the criterion of classifying this specimen as a "Tartar" one¹. Certainly, it does not mean that this connection must have always been the case.

After the above stated criterion had been accepted and the selection of archaeological finds from the territory of Poland had been made, a set of 26 specimens of possible "Tartar" provenance was established. Those are mainly arrowheads (24 specimens), all of them flat with pivots. As far as the shape of blades is concerned two

groups may be distinguished here: the deltoidal arrowheads (23 specimens) and the rhomboidal ones (1 specimen). Besides the arrowheads, a fragment of a karvash (a forearm protection) and a horse bit have been classified as "Tartar" finds coming from Polish territories. All these specimens were found at seven excavation sites (see the map).

1. Czerwno, the province of Zamość.

Three deltoidal arrowheads (fig. 1) and a fragment of a karvash (fig. 2) have been found in this village so far. They were discovered during the excavation works on the 10th-13th century stronghold², the remains of the town of Czerwień, situated at the crossroads of two important communication routes: Włodimierz-Zawichost and Brześć-Halicz³. Both the arrowheads and the part of a karvash come from level I of this structure, dated to the 12th-13th century⁴. A local story, which has been preserved up to now, tells us about the destruction of the town of Czerwno by the Tartars. According to it, the invaders managed to burn the town by means of pigeons with burning fire-brands tied to their tails. According to a chronicle relation, in 1240 Czerwień was seized by Batu Khan, who used a battering ram to achieve his goal⁵.

2. Dębno, the province of Kielce.

A deltoidal arrowhead was found in Dębno on the motte being the remains of a stronghold dated approximately to the 14th century and destroyed during the Lithuanian invasion in 1370 (fig. 3)⁶.

3. Kowala-Stępcocina, the province of Radom.

During the archaeological works on the stronghold

² K. J a ż d ż e w s k i, *Ogólne wiadomości o Czerwnie-Czerwieńiu*, "Archeologia Polski", vol. 4, 1959, fascicle 1, p. 82.

³ T. W ą s o w i c z, *Czerwień*, [in:] *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich*, vol. 1, part 2, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow 1962, p. 40.

⁴ A. Z b i e r s k i, *Wczesnośredniowieczne materiały archeologiczne z Czerwna nad Huczwą*, "Archeologia Polski", vol. 4, 1959, fascicle 1, p. 129.

⁵ K. J a ż d ż e w s k i, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁶ J. K u c z y Ń s k i, *XIV-wieczny gródek w Dębnie, woj. kielecki, gm. Nowa Słupia*, "Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Kielcach", vol. 12, 1982, p. 229.

¹ Bearing in mind the controversial character of terms used to refer to the nomads invading the territories of present-day Poland in the late Middle Ages, the term "Tartars" has been accepted as the one appearing in old medieval Polish literature. The term covers numerous nomadic ethnic groups most probably using Turkish as their language.

situated in this village, among others, a deltoidal arrowhead (fig. 4) as well as a horse bit, with a two-part tooth-bar and circular side-bars with short bars forged to them (fig. 5), were discovered. On the basis of the earthenware material the stronghold was dated to the 13th-15th century. The above stated specimens come from the oldest phase of the use of this building, the burnt stratum, which is the evidence of it having been destroyed by fire. This stratum is dated to the 13th-14th century⁷.

4. Cracow, the province of Cracow.

One deltoidal arrowhead comes from the archaeological works conducted at Wawel Castle. It derives from the stratum dated to the 13th century (fig. 8). There was an earth and timber stronghold on the western edge of Wawel Hill, which was burnt by the Tartars in 1241⁸.

5. Nawra, the province of Toruń.

A deltoidal arrowhead was found in this village during the probe investigations of the motte, the remains of a conical stronghold. The stronghold was most probably destroyed by the Lithuanians during the war of 1414⁹.

6. Opole, the province of Opole.

During the many years' research works of the stronghold at Ostrówek in Opole, among others, a rhomboidal arrowhead (fig. 7)¹⁰ was found. It is most probably one of the arrowheads discovered in the years 1930-1931 and termed as eastern by W. Holubowicz. They come from the burnt stratum dated back to the middle of the 13th century and associated with the Tartar troops' activities in the vicinity of Opole in 1241¹¹.

7. Plemięta, the province of Toruń.

A numerous (consisting of 13 specimens) set of deltoidal arrowheads (fig. 6) comes from the stronghold at Plemięta. Among these specimens six variations depending on the blade shape have been distinguished by the authors of their elaboration¹². The year 1414 has been

accepted as the most probable date of the destruction of the Plemięta stronghold. The Tartars, who remained in the service of the Lithuanians, or the Lithuanian-Russian warriors armed with oriental shooting weapons and ravaging the province of Chełmno at that time¹³ might have been the perpetrators of this catastrophe.

* * *

The deltoidal arrowheads seem to be the most numerous group among the above presented specimens. In the hitherto existing archaeological, mainly Russian, literature they have been frequently termed as Mongolian. This point of view is most clearly justified by A. F. Miedvediev, who connects the deltoidal arrowhead finds from Europe with the Mongol invasions¹⁴. The above thesis is later repeated by many other archeologists. The words of I. L. Kyzlasov, who classifies these arrowheads as Kiptchack¹⁵, seem to offer the only different ethnic interpretation of these military accessories.

A considerable expansion of this form of arrowheads in Asia and Europe appears to be an undeniable fact. Despite a great number of finds, the chronological scope of their use and the genesis of their form cannot be easily specified. First single specimens of this shape, dating from the first half of the 1st century A.D., come from Tuwa and the Minusińska Valley and some equally rare ones, dating from the 8th-10th century, also from Mongolia and the Altai Mountains¹⁶. However, the majority of arrowheads belonging to this variation date back to the 13th-14th century. This chronology is shared by all the deltoidal arrowheads found on the whole territory they are present on. As we have already noticed, this territory is a vast one, as these finds appear in the Amur basin¹⁷, over Baikal, in the Altai Mountains¹⁸ and Mon-

szewach i Plemiętach, "Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Archeologia", vol. 6, 1980, fig. 12; by the same authors, *Militaria z grodziska w Plemiętach. Broń strzelcza*, [in:] *Plemięta. Średniowieczny gródek w ziemi chełmińskiej*, ed. A. N a d o l s k i, Warsaw-Poznań-Toruń 1985, pp. 112-114.

¹³ A. N a d o l s k i, *Gródek w Plemiętach. Wprowadzenie w problematykę badań*, [in:] *Plemięta ...*, p. 10.

¹⁴ A. F. M e d v e d e v, *Ručnoe metal'noe orużje. Luk i strely, samostrel. VIII-XIV v.*, "Archeologija SSSR. Svod archeologičeskich istočnikov", vol. E1-36, Moscow 1966; by the same author, *Tataro-mongolskie nakonečniki strel v Vostočnoj Evrope*, "Sovetskaja Archeologija", 1966, No. 2, pp. 50-60.

¹⁵ I. L. K y z l a s o v, *Kypčaki i vosstanija enisejskich plemen v XIII v.*, "Sovetskaja Archeologija", 1980, No. 2, p. 87.

¹⁶ Ju. S. C h u d j a k o v, *Voorużenie srednevekovykh kočevnikov Južnoj Sibiri i Centralnoj Azii*, Novosibirsk 1986, pp. 28 and 38.

¹⁷ E. I. D e r e v j a n k o, *Očerki voennogo dela plemen Priamur'ja i Primor'ja*, [in:] *Voennoe delo drevnego naselenija Severnoj Azii*, Novosibirsk 1987, pp. 205-219, fig. 3.

¹⁸ V. F. N e m c r o v, *Nakonečniki strel undugunskoj kultury*, [in:] *Archeologija Severnoj Azii*, Novosibirsk 1982, pp. 168-177, table I, p. 169; by the same author, *Voinskoe snarjażenie i orużje mongol'skogo voina XIII-XIV vv.*, "Sovetskaja Archeologija", 1987, No. 2, fig. 2; Ju. S. C h u d j a k o v, *Kollekcija železnych nakonečnikov strel čitinskogo muzeja*, [in:] *Archeologija Severnoj ...*, pp. 135-148, fig. 3.

⁷ E. Ć w i e r t a k, *Grodzisko stożkowane w miejscowości Kowala-Stepocina, gm. loco, woj. radomskie. Badania weryfikacyjne*, Łódź 1980, (a typewritten copy in the PKZ department in Łódź).

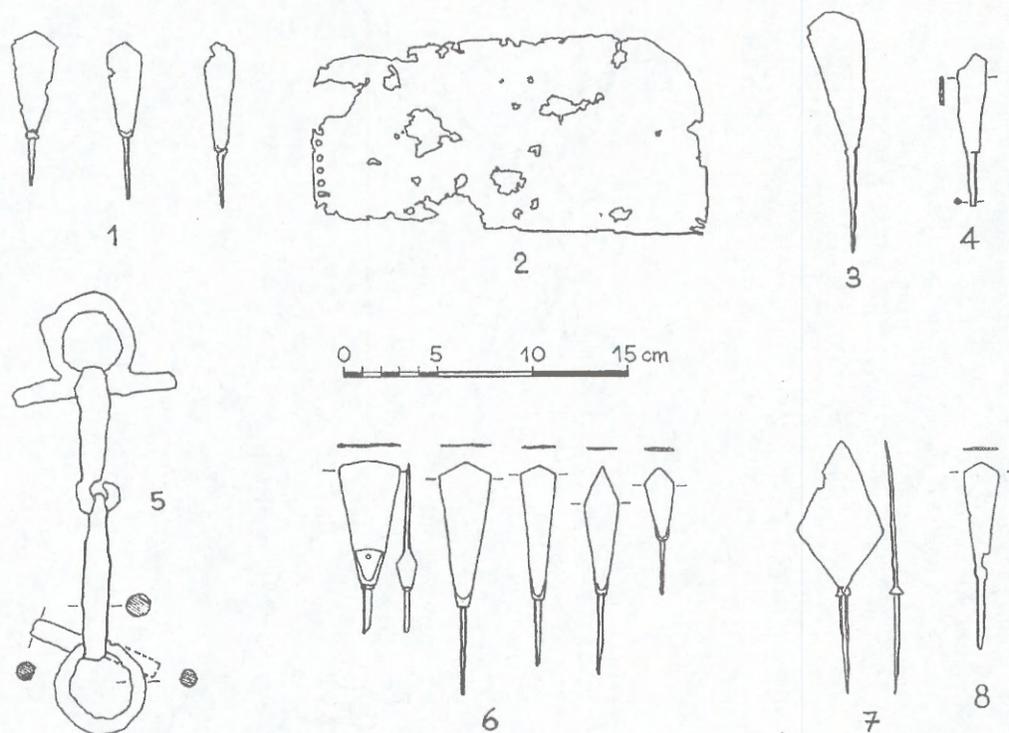
⁸ B. G u e r q u i n, *Zamki w Polsce*, Warsaw 1984, p. 178.

⁹ According to the information received from Dr. Kola, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń.

¹⁰ K. W a c h o w s k i, *Średniowieczna broń miotająca na Śląsku w świetle znalezisk z Ostrówka w Opolu*, "Archeologia Polski", vol. 27, 1982, fascicle 1, p. 194, fig. 13 k. In K. Wachowski's publication also a forked arrowhead is classified as an East-European one (fig. 13i). However, forked arrowheads were widespread in medieval Asia and Europe (Western Europe included). Moreover, the results of the study of this arrowhead variation seem to be unsatisfactory and the question about the provenance of particular variants cannot be answered. Therefore the above mentioned specimen has not been discussed in this paper.

¹¹ W. H o ł u b o w i c z, *Opole w wiekach X-XII*, Katowice 1956, pp. 64-65.

¹² A. K o l a, G. W i l k e, *Późnośredniowieczne siedziby rycerskie na ziemi chełmińskiej w świetle badań archeologicznych w Sło-*



Figures: 1. Deltoidal arrowheads from Czermino. 2. Fragment of a karvash from Czermino. 3. Deltoidal arrowhead from Dębno. 4. Deltoidal arrowhead from Kowala-Stępcocina. 5. Horse bit from Kowala-Stępcocina. 6. Variations of deltoidal arrowheads from Plemięta. 7. Rhomboidal arrowhead from Opole. 8. Deltoidal arrowhead from Cracow.

golia¹⁹, as well as in South-Western Siberia²⁰ and the South Ural Mountains²¹. They have been found in Eastern Europe, not only on the Black Sea Steppes and the territories of former Russia²², but also on the Volga in Bulgaria²³. The westernmost territories that the deltoidal arrowheads have been discovered on so far are the territories of Poland, Slovakia²⁴ and Hungary²⁵.

The very fact that the above discussed form is so widespread makes us deny the conception that deltoidal arrowheads were used by warriors from only one ethnic group. On the contrary, this common variation of arrow-

heads was employed by numerous nomadic groups of the Great Steppe. However, their presence on so vast territories may really be connected with the migrations of the Steppe people caused by the Mongol expansion.

In the hitherto existing archaeological literature also the rhomboidal arrowheads, analogues with the specimen found in Opole, have been considered as Mongolian. Generally, they also date back to the 13th-14th century and their territorial range roughly corresponds to that of the deltoidal arrowheads. It extends from beyond Baikal²⁶, Mongolia²⁷ and South-Western Siberia²⁸ to Eastern Europe²⁹. In the case of this variation, the remarks made in connection with the deltoidal arrowheads may be repeated: this variation was common among various nomadic ethnic groups of the Great Steppe and its broad territorial range may be a result of the Mongol expansion.

The fragment of a karvash is a very interesting find discovered on the territory of Poland. It is made of sheet iron about 1 mm thick, max. 20 cm long and max. about 12 cm wide. The fragments of two iron rivets have been

¹⁹ Ju. S. Chudjakov, *Železnyje nakonečniki strel iz Mongolii* [in:] *Drevnie kul'tury Mongolii*, Novosibirsk 1985, pp. 96-114, fig. 1; A. F. Medvedev, *Tataro-mongolskie nakonečniki ...*, fig. 1.

²⁰ A. I. Solov'ev, *Voennoe delo korennoho naselenija Zapadnoj Sibiri. Epocha srednevekovja*, Novosibirsk 1987, p. 39, table IV, 7-9.

²¹ V. A. Ivanov, *Vooruženie srednevekovykh kočevnikov Južnogo Urala i Priuralja (VII-XIV vv.)* [in:] *Voennoe delo drevnego naselenija Severnoj Azii*, Novosibirsk 1987, pp. 172-189, p. 183, fig. 1; V. A. Ivanov, B. A. Kriger, *Kurgany kypčackogo vremeni na Južnom Urale (XII-XIV vv.)*, Moscow 1988, p. 26, fig. 1.

²² A. F. Medvedev, *Ručnoje metalnoe oružie ...*; pp. 75-82, by the same author, *Tataro-mongolskie nakonečniki ...*, pp. 50-60, fig. 1-4; G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *Kocevniki Vostočnoj Evropy pod vlastiju zoloto-ordynskich chanov*, Moscow 1966, fig. 3.

²³ A. Ch. Chalikov, *Kul'tura Biljara. Bulgarskie orudija truda i oružie X-XIII vv.*, Moscow 1985, p. 155, fig. LIII.

²⁴ A. Ruttkay, *Waffen und Reiterausrüstung des 9. bis zur ersten hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts in der Slowakei*, II, "Slovenska Archeologia", vol. XXIV, part 2, 1976, pp. 327-328, fig. 54.

²⁵ D. C. Nicolle, *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era, 1050-1350*, New York 1988, vol. 2, p. 940.

²⁶ Ju. S. Chudjakov, *Kollekcija železnych nakonečnikov...*, pp. 135-148, fig. 4-5.

²⁷ Ju. S. Chudjakov, *Železnyje nakonečniki strel iz Mongolii* [in:] *Drevnie kul'tury Mongolii*, Novosibirsk 1985, pp. 96-114, fig. 4-5.

²⁸ A. I. Solov'ev, *op. cit.*, p. 40, table IV, 2,3,6.

²⁹ A. F. Medvedev, *Tataro-mongolskie nakonečniki ...*, pp. 50-60, fig. 5; G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *op. cit.*, fig. 3; A. Ch. Chalikov, *op. cit.*, p. 155, fig. LIII.



The localization of the archaeological sites on Polish territories where "Tartar" military accessories were found. 1. Czermno, the province of Zamość. 2. Dębno, the province of Kielce. 3. Kowala-Stępczyna, the province of Radom. 4. Cracow, the province of Cracow. 5. Nawra, the province of Toruń. 6. Opole, the province of Opole. 7. Plemięta, the province of Toruń. Note: a framed mark denotes a site where more than one specimens were discovered.

preserved on its longer edge. It is a fragment of a two-part karvash, probably formed for the left forearm. Medieval finds of this kind of defensive arms are rare. The completely preserved karvash coming from the burnt stratum of the stronghold situated at Sachnovki in Ukraine and destroyed by the Mongols in 1240³⁰ appears to be a close analogy. The interpretation of this specimen which describes it as an element of a Russian warrior's arms is not a very plausible one, as no other

karvashes have been discovered on the territory of medieval Russia so far. Moreover, the term "narutch" does not appear in Russian literature before the 16th century. M. B. Gorelik's opinion presenting this karvash as a Mongolian specimen³¹ seems to be more convincing. The hypothesis that this kind of forearm protection was used in Latin Europe in the 13th century has not been proved so far. Karvashes were, however, used in contemporary, 13th century, Persia. According to M. B. Go-

³⁰ A. N. Kirpičnikov, *Drevnerusskoe oružie*, vol. III, *Dospech, kompleks boevych sredstv IX-XIII vv.*, "Archeologija SSSR. Svod archeologičeskich istočnikov", vol. E1-36, Leningrad 1971, fig. 13, pp. 20-21.

³¹ M. V. Gorelik, *Rannij mongol'skij dospech (IX-XIV vv.)* [in:] *Archeologija, etnografija, antropologija Mongolii*, Novosibirsk 1987, pp. 163-207, p. 196.

relik, they had been used in Central Asia since the 7th/8th century A.D.³² Few interesting late medieval two-part karvashes have been recently found in the Northern Caucasus in the Golden Horde's sphere of influence³³. Therefore the hypothesis that karvashes were used by the late medieval nomads of the Great Steppe seems to be very plausible.

The horse bit found on the stronghold situated at Kowala-Stepocina, where a deltoidal arrowhead was also discovered, is the last specimen termed as "Tartar" found on the territory of Poland. There exist only few analogous specimens. The only one that the author of this article is familiar with comes from the nomad's grave found in the village of Kamienka in Ukraine. The grave dates back to the 13th-14th century³⁴. This form of horse bit was recognized by G. A. Fedorov-Davydova as one of the types of horse bits used on the Golden Horde's territories in the late Middle Ages³⁵.

The above remarks allow us to form the conclusion that the discussed archaeological specimens from Polish territories are undoubtedly connected with the material culture of the late medieval nomads of the Great Steppe. Moreover, the eastern provenance of these relics is a fact and cannot be denied. This statement, however, does not explain whether these specimens reached our territory directly, as a result of the nomads' invasions, or indirectly, brought by the peoples who settled in Eastern Europe e.g. the Russians or the Lithuanians. As far as this issue is concerned a few interesting pieces of information can be found in the written sources. They allow us to conclude that among the seven archaeological sites that the discussed relics come from the presence of Tartar troops, already during their first invasion on Polish territories in 1241, might be proved in the case of three places, namely in Czeremo, Cracow and Opole. Two of these archaeological sites (Nawra and Plemięta) are the relics of strongholds destroyed by the Lithuanians and the cooperating Tartars in 1414, when they were ravaging the province of Chelmo. The stronghold at Dębno was probably burnt down by the Lithuanians in 1370. As the practice of granting land to Tartar refugees started in Lithuania at least in the first half of the 14th century³⁶, the presence of Tartar reinforcements in the Lithuanian troops could also be the case here. Therefore the written sources suggest that among these archaeological sites the appearance of Tartar military accessories at six places might be a result of a direct contact with

the nomads. Although the presence of nomadic people in the case of the remaining, the seventh, site (Kowala-Stepocina) is not confirmed by the written sources, this place was undoubtedly situated in the sphere of a direct penetration conducted by Tartar troops, which started with their first invasion in the middle of the 13th century. As the stratum of ashes that the above mentioned relics were discovered in dates back to the turn of the 13th century, it may be suggested that the stronghold at Kowala-Stepocina was burnt down during the third Tartar invasion in the year 1287.

To sum up the above remarks, it must be said that the collation of the interpretations of the archaeological sources and pieces of information obtained from the written ones confirms the possibility of an ethnic identification of these archaeological finds. It may be surprising that the small number of these relics does not correspond to the considerable destruction caused by the Tartar invasions of the Middle Ages recounted in the written materials. However, the possibility of this being a result of a wrong identification of the archaeological relics kept in Polish museums cannot be excluded. It should also be pointed out that in Poland there are a few archaeological sites which are the marks of war destruction and manslaughter. The presence of Tartar troops at these places is clearly confirmed in the written sources, though no mobile objects of nomadic origin can be found.

Coming back to the possibility, already discussed in the introduction, of treating, though with some caution, the above presented facts as a model example of an ethnic interpretation of the archaeological relics associated with the nomads, it should be noticed that if no written sources were available, such a limited number of these specimens might justify a for-and-against discussion on the direct presence of the Steppe invaders on our territory. Thus, the advantages resulting from the use of different kinds of sources have once more been stressed here. As far as the issues of medieval Tartar invasions on Polish territories, which are relatively well documented in the written materials, are concerned the archaeological sources, which play an auxiliary role nowadays, as well as their numerical increase may help us to solve numerous problems such as the precise marking of the invading troops' marching routes.

Translated by Zuzanna Poklewska-Parra

³² Ibidem, p. 196.

³³ D. Ju. Čachkiev, E. I. Narožnyj, *Pogrebenie znatnogo gorskogo voina načala XV veka iz selenija Verchnij Alkun (Čečeno-Ingušetija)* [in:] *Voennoe delo drevnego i srednevekovogo naselenija severnoj i centralnoj Azii*, Novosibirsk 1990, p. 130, fig. 1.

³⁴ S. A. Pletneva, *Drevnosti Černych Klobukov*, "Archeologija SSSR. Svod archeologičeskich istočnikov", vol. E1-19, Moscow 1973, table 40, 1.

³⁵ G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *op. cit.*, fig. 2.

³⁶ In the years 1356-1359 one of Khan Berdibek's sons took refuge in the province of Smolensk and was granted land there. In the following years his sons were also granted pieces of land on this territory. J. Tysszkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce*, Warsaw 1989, p. 146.

